

A
R E P L Y,

D. 24⁵⁶ On Behalf of the People called

Q U A K E R S,

To Two *Petitions* against them

(The One out of *Norfolk*, the Other
from *Bury in Suffolk*)

Being some Brief Observations made on
those Petitions, and Humbly Tendered
to the Consideration of the

H O U S E O F C O M M O N S ,

To whom those Petitions are Directed

Thos. Ellwood

L O N D O N ,

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A Reply, on Bebalf of the People called Quakers, to Two Petitions against them, &c.

THAT we may not build too large a Porch to so small an House, we shall only premise, That the Christian Religion hath often Suffered, but never taught or countenanced Persecution; That it was the Persecuting Jews, not the Persecuted Apostle, who cry'd Men of Israel, help, Acts 21. 28. That these Petitioners against us, have nothing to Charge us with of Immorality, nothing against the Publick Peace, nothing but what concerns our Religion: Which is an implicit Acknowledgment (at least) that they are in the same Streight to find out Matter of Accusation against us, that Daniel's Adversaries were in, to find Matter against him; who thereupon ingeniously confess, We shall not find any Occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God, Dan. 6. 5.

We begin with the Norfolk Petition, as that which (we understand) was contrived first, and probably led on the other.

Petition. *We cannot, without Resentment, take notice of the great Growth, and daily Increase of the Quakers, and the Mischief and Dangers from thence threatening this Nation.*

Observation, We hope we may, without incurring their Resentment, observe, That the Jews of old took notice, and that not without Resentment, of the great Growth and daily Increase of the Christians, in the first Age of the spreading of the Gospel, and of the Mischief and Dangers they apprehended did from thence threaten their Nation, John 11. 48. Which Misapprehension of theirs, made them bend their Forces against the Innocent Christians, to Suppress, Destroy, and Root them out. Wherby

they brought upon Themselves, and their Nation, the Mischief and Dangers they feared: God avenging, by the hands of the Romans, and their own one against another, their Evil Treatment of his Son and Servants.

Pet. 'Tis observable, with what restless Zeal their deluding Teachers—ramble into all parts of these Kingdoms.

Obs. 'Tis probable, the little Zeal (unless for Maintenance) the Petitioners have observed in their own over-rested Teachers, makes the Zeal of those they Petition against so observable to them. But they may do well also to observe (which if they will not, it may be hoped, They to whom they have Petitioned, will) how much this Charge, of Restless Zeal, rendets us like unto the Apostles and Primitive Christian Teachers, whose Restless Zeal would not suffer them to sit down, and rest in a Fat Benefice (with a Curat to perform the Service for them.) But made them Travel into most of the then Civilized Parts of the World, as the *Acts of the Apostles*, and *Ecclesiastical Histories* shew. And though their Enemies then were more modest than to call it *Rambling*; yet they failed not to call them *Deluding Teachers*; as these do us.

Pet. And (as we suspect) many Romish Emissaries under their Disguise.

Obs. The Petitioners should have done well to have given the Ground of this Suspicion of theirs, if they had any to give, that it might have been examined. But to Suggest (for it is probable this came, & Suggesto, out of the Pulpit: For Justices, we hope, would deaf more justly) so Scandalous a Matter, upon a bare Suspicion, without assigning any Ground for it, is (to speak modestly of it) an *Evil-Surmising*, and *against Charity*: For *Charity* (we are assured, 1 Cor. 13. 5.) thinks no *Evil*. And since *Charity* is so excellent a Christian Virtue, as to be preferr'd to both *Faith* and *Hope*, verse 13. We are sorry

to find so little Charity among the Justices and Grand Jurors of Norfolk. This Suspicion of Romish Emissaries going under the Disguise of Quakers, is indeed an old Scandal rais'd by our protest Enemies, the Priests, above Forty Years ago, and by them industriously spread, and kept up ever since, on purpose to traduce us to the better sort of People. But is it not strange, that if this had been true, not one single Instance could be given, not one Proof made in all this time, of one Romish Emissary found among the Quakers! This alone is enough to baffle the Slander: which it hath done already with considerate Persons. Therefore, without taking further notice of it here, we will conclude with Queen Elizabeth's Motto (used while she was Princess, Persecuted and a Prisoner) viz. *Much suspected by me: Nothing proved can be.*

Pet. *And boldly spread their Venemous Doctrines everywhere.*

Obs. This Venemous Epithet so ill becomes Justices and Grand Jurors, that we are not willing to think it theirs; but rather imposed on them by some of their dictating Teachers. But passing by the Venome of it, we cannot but observe here likewise, how much they make us, even in this also, to resemble those, whom we desire and labour to imitate, the Apostles of our Lord. Whose Boldness, in Asserting the Christian Faith, and Spreading the Doctrine of their Holy Religion (which, no doubt, their Opposers, the Priests of that Age, and such Rulers as those Priests could influence) thought to be wrong, though they seem to have been more modest, than to call it Venemous) made, even their Adversaries Marvel; who yet were so ingenuous as to impute their Boldness to their having been with Jesus, *Acts 4. 13.*

Pet. Attempting to infect and shake the Minds of weak Protestants.

Obs. Had not those Protestants weak Teachers, they would not be such weak Protestants. Nor will it, peradventure, upon due Consideration, be found a Dis-service in the Quakers, if by their Zealous Preaching, they excite those Teachers (how unwillingly soever) to be more Zealous, more Affiduous, more Laborious and Diligent in Preaching, to strengthen their weak Hearers.

Pet. And Assuming Rules of Discipline, Power in matters of Religion, and Forms of Government, Repugnant to the Establish'd Laws of this Kingdom, contrary to the very Acts of Toleration, and not allow'd to any other Dissenters.

Obs. We presume it is intended, in all the Branches of this manifold Charge [with respect to themselves only,] and we hope it will be so understood; That if we assume Rules of Discipline in Church Matters, they are for our selves only; Power in Matters of Religion, for and amongst our selves only. As for Forms of Government, though they are Ambiguous Words, and such as we do not use amongst, or of, our selves: Yet as there ought to be Government in every Religious, as well as Civil, Society; and a Form, or Forms of such Government: So we know of no Form of Government in our Religious Society, no Rules of Discipline, no Power in Matters of Religion, among us, that is Repugnant to the Establish'd Laws of this Kingdom, relating only to Civil Matters, nor contrary to the Acts for Toleration. Nor (with Submission to our Superiors) do we see, how those Acts could be truly called *Acts of Toleration to Dissenters*, if they did not Tolerate each sort of Dissenters, to Assume Rules of Discipline, Power in Matters of Religion, and Forms of Church Government, for and amongst themselves, while nothing is thereby done Repugnant to the Publick Peace. Nor do we understand, but that the same is allow'd to, and practic'd by all other Protestant Dissenters. Vouch-

Pet. Vouching in all their Actions Divine Inspiration for their Warrant, and the Indulgence of the Government for their Indempnity.

Obs. In All their Actions, is too large an Expression, and shews the Petitioners spake by rote. But if we vouch Divine Inspiration for our Warrant in some things, which relate more immediately to the Worship and Service of God (and undertake wthal to make appear, that That Inspiration is not disagreeable to the Divine Testimonies recorded in the Holy Scriptures) we hope our Warrant will not be disliked, for being Grounded on Inspiration, nor that Inspiration, for being Divine: And that the Indulgence of so Indulgent a Government will be sufficient to Indempnifie us, in our Peaceable Performance thereof.

Pet. How apparently their Blasphemous Books, and Pernicious Principles, tend to subvert the Fundamentals of Christianity, and undermine the Civil Government, are sufficiently Demonstrable.

Obs. Demonstrable! Not yet Demonstrated then, it seems, tho' for these Forty Years, and more, it has been endeavoured. Hard Words and Ill Names may easily be put upon the best Books and Principles. And there is no Book or Principle, which may not, by Perversion and Misconstruction, be made to look and sound Ill. But sure we are (and always ready to make appear) that neither are our Books Blasphemous, nor our Principles Pernicious. The Fundamentals of Christianity we heartily Own, and Assert as Boldly and Vigorously as any. And how far we have been from undermining the Civil Government, our Practice, well known throughout these Kingdoms, is the best Demonstration.

Pet. The Publishing whereof, by pretended Permission of the Government, is of most dangerous Consequence.

Obs. Pray give the Government leave to judge of that. So long as the Church of Rome could stop the Publishing of any

any Books or Principles, but her own, the Christian World lay very snug, in a deep Sleep of Darkness and Profound Ignorance, which she had lul'd it into, which was what she desired. And if the first Reformers had been debarr'd the Liberty of Publishing their Books, and Principles, the Reformation must either not have been begun, or greatly retarded in the carrying of it on, and Popery might have prevailed still. It is a sure Maxim, that Truth is Strongest. And therefore, they who have Truth on their side, and who know their own Principles to be Sound, need not fear the Publishing of Principles by others; for if those Principles publish'd by others be true, they co-operate with theirs; and therein they have Cause to rejoice: If false, they have thereby a fair Occasion given them, by exposing and confuting the Errors thereof, to illustrate more clearly, and establish more firmly, the true Principles asserted by themselves; and for that they have no cause to be Sorry.

Thus far the Petition out of Norfolk, the Prayer of which shall be considered together with that from Bury, which will help to explain one another.

The Petition from Bury speaks in the Name of The Alderman, Assistant Justice, chief Burges and Burgeses of the Common Council, in behalf of themselves and other the Inhabitants of that Burrough; And in it they say,

Pet. That we, considering all Ancient Heresies, which have vexed both Church and State, were never so formidable in their Rise and Progress, as are the Quakers.

Obs. Are then the Alderman and Burgeses of Bury acquainted with, and versed in, All Ancient Heresies? Or do they rely upon the assistance of their Assistant Justice? Or do both They and He take this upon trust from some not very trusty Parson. Have they read, examined, considered the vexation, the Spoil, the Havock, of both Estates and Lives, and almost Desolation, made in both Church

Church and State, by the *Arian Hæresie* alone, so tragically set forth by *Ruffinus*, *Socrates Scholasticus*, *Theodoret* and *Sozomen* in their *Ecclesiastical Histories*? Or if they have, can they, without blushing, say, The *Arrian Hæresie*, and all other *Ancient Hæresies*, were never so formidable in their Rite and Progress, as are the Quakers; Who are the Quakers formidable to, unless to the Priests? And wherein to them? Unless the Quakers Zeal (which they so complain of) makes them fear, that they must both *Preach better* and *Live better*, or else they will be in danger to lose the best of their Hearers, and perhaps with them, what they value more than them, some of their Maintenance? But they say,

Pet. We have too just a Cause of dreading the Subversion of our Government by them, if not carefully prevented and suppressed.

Obs. Our Government! What do they mean, The Government of the Burrough of *Bury St. Edmonds* by the Aldermen, assistant Justice, chief *Burgesses* and *Burgesses* of the Common Council there? We never understood that any Quaker hath attempted to meddle with their Government, or intrude into it; but rather, that some have declin'd it, when invited thereunto. If they mean the Government of *England*, we hope they will not so appropriate it to themselves, as to exclude their Fellow-Subjects from a Share in the Care, Support and Preservation thereof; which we (and all other Protestant Dissenters) have as much reason as they (with respect to our Estates, Liberties and Lives) to wish and seek the Welfare and Safety of. And we humbly appeal to the Governours themselves, whether we have given any just Cause, by our Carriage, Deportment and Behaviour, to and under the Government, for any to Dread the Subversion of the Government by us.

Blisgood John Ruth modi regni beginne January 28th 1711.

13

Pet.

Pet. Being in their Clandestine Constitutions opposite to the Condition of our established Polity.

Obs. What they mean, by *Clandestine Constitutions*, we know not; nor what, by the *Condition of their established Polity*: But this we know, that as we have nothing which we call *Constitutions*; so neither any thing that is *Clandestine*, or done in a *Clandestine way* among us.

Pet. And in their Principles of Faith Anti-christian.

Obs. So did the Church of Rome object to the Protestants in general upon the Reformation, as Bp. Jewel, in his *Apology for the Church of England*, observes, *Clamant hodie passim* (says he, p. 7.) *Nos omnes esse Hæreticos, discessisse à fide, &c.* They cry out now a-days, That we are all *Hæreticks*, That we are departed from the *Faith*, &c. But if that was a *false Charge* against them; we are sure, this is not a *true Charge* against us. For we sincerely and heartily own all that is written in the Holy Scriptures concerning *Christ*, with respect to his *Conception, Birth, Life, Miracles, Doctrines, Sufferings, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension, Mediation and future Coming to Judgment*. Which we take to be the Sum of true Christian *Faith*; and which whosoever rightly believes, ought not (we think) to be accounted *Anti-christian* in *Principles of Faith*.

Pet. Of Government *Antimonarchical*.

Obs. One would think this Arrow also had been taken out of the *Popish Quiver* against Protestants, so exactly does it resemble what the same Jewell, in the same place, says, the Papist charged them withal. Where, having recited a large Beadroll of particular *Standers cast upon them*, *Clamant* (says he) *nos id agere et querere, ut Monarchia et Regnorum Status evertantur, &c.* They cry, that we do these things, with purpose thereby to overturn *Monarchies and the States of Kingdoms*. We doubt not but this was unduly charged upon them. But nothing could

be more *falsly* suggested against us, whose *avowed Principle* and *known Practice*, it has always been to yield a peaceable and quiet *Subjection* to the Powers which God hath set over us.

Pet. *In point of Doctrine Anti-Scriptural.*

Obs. *We deny that*; and are ready to undertake the Proof of every *Doctrine* we hold, by and from the *Scri-
ptures*.

Pet. *And in Practices Illegal.*

Obs. This also, if it relate to *Civil* matters, we deny, as *utterly false*; and may, we hope with modesty; say, That no People are more *conformable to the Laws*, in things *Civil*, than we. And if it relate to *Religious Performances*, as it seems to do, by the words next following, *viz.* [Having their *Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings.*] We shall need to say no more to it but this, That if we, and other Dissenters, could have *actually comply'd* with whatsoever the *Laws required in Matters of Religion*, there would not have been *room for Indulgence, or need of an Act of Toleration.*

Pet. *Having their Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, which we cannot but reasonably believe tend, not only to the Subversion of our Laws, but of our Religion also, to us of greater concerns than our Lives.*

Obs. To *Believe* is one thing; to *believe reasonably* (or to have *Reason to believe*, is another thing: Which if these Petitioners pretend to have, they should (if they expected to be believed) have assigned the Reasons of their so *believing*. Well known it is to the Nation in general, and to the Government in particular, that we have had *Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetngs* (and those *the same* that now we have, and for the same Services) many Years before the Government was pleased to grant the present *Indulgence*; yea, and that in the times of the greatest Troubles, and hottest *Persecutions*:

Which was an Evidence, beyond bare saying so, That our Religion was of greater Concern to us than our Lives. But what one single Act or thing have any, or all of those Meetings of ours produced, in all this time, that has tended to the *Subversion* of the Laws, or Established Religion? Do not both the one, and the other, stand now, at this very day, as *Safe* and *Firm* as ever they did, at least for us? Can it reasonably be supposed, that if those Meetings of ours had so *dangerous* a Tendency, as to *Subvert* the Laws and Religion of the Nation, the *Piercing Eye* of the Government should not see it as well, and as soon, as the *Aldermen* and *Burgesses* of *Bury*? How come they, now all of a sudden, to be so *Eagle-Ey'd*, to pretend to see that, which *their Betters* (and who have much *better Advantages* for seeing) could never yet see! For can it be imagined, that if our *Governours* had seen, or suspected, our Meetings to have so *Evil* and *Dangerous* a Tendency, as is here Suggested, they would so *Propitiously* have *Indulged those Meetings*, and granted us a *Toleration* thus to hold them: We wish these Petitioners would think well of this; and consider whether it was *decent* for the *Aldermen* and *Burgesses* of *Bury* thus to *Impeach* the *Wisdom* and *Conduct* of the *Government*.

Hitherto they have spoken in the *Accusative Case*: They now turn to the *Vocative*, Invoking the Parliament against us. As therefore we have made brief Observations on the Charges: Let us now, as briefly, take notice of the *Prayer* in each Petition; which we chose to consider together, because one seems to explain the other.

That out of *Norfolk* must be acknowledged to speak the more modestly of the two. For it Prays the House of Commons, *To take these things* (the Charges in the Body of the Petition mentioned) *into Consideration*, that the *said Principles and Practices may be strictly Examined, and Censured, or Supprest*, as they shall appear to deserve, and as

in their great *Wisdom* shall seem expedient. Nor is it wholly destitute of some Shew of Tenderness towards us : For it prays This may be done, *With whatsoever Tenderness to the Persons and Estates of these People.* But as it can hardly be conceived, how *Principles and Practices* flowing therefrom (especially where *Divine Inspiration*, as these Petioners say, is *vouched for Warrant thereof*) can be *Supprest*, without exercising great *Cruelty* (the Opposite to *Tenderness*) on the *Persons or Estates of the People*, whose *Principles and Practices* they are : So, if the *Prayer* of the other *Petition from Bury* (which was Formed after this, and comes from their near Neighbours) may pass for a *Comment upon the Norfolk-Text*, it will not be very difficult to find, what, in the softer *Norfolk Dialect*, is meant by *Suppressing our Principles and Practices*. For the *Alderman and Burgeesses of Bury* say, *We therefore, oblig'd in Duty to God and our Country, do humbly pray your timely Consideration of our Jealousies, and remove our Fears ; if not by totally Suppressing, yet at least by preventing their after Growth and Increase amongst us.* Here, after an acknowledgment, that all those High Charges, exhibited against us in the *Petition*, are grounded but upon their own (groundless) *Jealousies*, they (how mannerly, let others judge) offer the Parliament *Hobson's Choice*, either *totally to Suppress us*, or at least to prevent *our after Growth and Increase* ; which perhaps cannot be done, without *totally suppressing us* ; or if it could, must needs tend to a *total Suppressing* of us. Now if they, who have declared *their Religion to be of greater Concern to them than their Lives*, could find in their Hearts to have so much *Charity* for their Neighbours, as to admit *our Religion to be of greater Concern to us than our Lives* (which we think we have given a full proof of, to say no more, as ever they have done) they might thence reasonably conclude, that we will part with our

our Lives, rather than with our Religion ; and that there is no way totally to Suppress us, but by Cutting our Throats, or Knocking out our Brains : Which must therefore be supposed to be their Meaning. And would they have the Honourable the Commons of England in Parliament Assembled, undertake this Inhumane Piece of Butchery, to defile their hands in the innocent Blood of so many Thousands of harmless, peaceable and industrious People, who are their Fellow-Citizens, and Fellow-Commoners, and by the Suffrages of some of whom, many of themselves were Elected into that Honourable Society ; and to Act, or Enact, so Barbarous a Tragedy, only to remove the groundless Fears of a few Jealous-Headed Alderman and Burgeesses of Bury ; who seem to have forgotten what is written of some (whom they in this too nearly resemble) who were said to have been in great Fear, where no (cause of) Fear was, Psal. 53. 5.

They close their Petitions ; That out of Norfolk, thus.

Petit. That the true Christian Religion may be preserved from Popish Superstition, and unpolluted with Enthusiastical Innovation.

That from Bury, thus : That our Posterity may untroubled live, by this early Care of our Laws and Liberties, and we enjoy the wished-for Happiness of a Peaceful life.

Obs. To the First we say, It is strange they should fear the Christian Religion should be polluted with Popish Superstitions by the Quakers, who, of all that go under the Protestant Name, are generally acknowledged to be furthest removed from, and most averse to Popish Superstitions ; and whose great Objection to those of other Persuasions has always been, their not having thoroughly enough relinquish'd Popish Superstitions. And for Enthusiastical Innovations ; as we do not own the word in that sense, in which they abusively apply it

to us (tho' *Divine Inspiration*, or God's speaking by his Spirit in the Heart of man, we do own) so we always offer our *Doctrines* and *Principles* to be Examined by the Holy Scriptures ; which were written by *Divine Inspiration*, and are best understood by the Inspiration of the same *Spirit* by which they were written.

To the Second we say, We desire, as well as they, that their Posterity may live untroubled : But we think they might have done well to have considered, that *we have Posterity*, as well as they ; and the like Inducements from natural Affection, to wish that our Posterity may live untroubled as they for theirs. Sure we are, and it is but too obvious, that we have more cause to apprehend Trouble and Danger too, to our Posterity from them and theirs, than they or theirs from us or ours ; For tho' we have done nothing, since we were a People, that might either give Trouble to them, or threaten it to their Posterity ; they stick not here openly to propose, and seek the *Ruin* and *Extirpation* of both *us* and *our Posterity*. They desire they may enjoy the wisht for Happiness of a Peaceful Life. We envy it them not : But God forbid they should *Swim* into it through a *Sea of Innocent Blood*. Can they find no way to the wisht-for Happiness of a Peaceful Life, but by the *Destruction* of their Fellow-Subjects and *Peaceable Neighbours*? Had not *Self-love* (to say no worse) been more prevalent with them (or with their *Envious Guides*, who probably have animated them to these Malicious Counsels) than *Christian Charity* (which seeks the Good and Happiness of all, and teaches to love our Neighbours as our selves) they would have been Content, that *we also should enjoy the wisht-for Happiness of a Peaceful Life*. But since they are so *uncharitable* to grutch us that, and so *uncchristian* to seek to bereave us of it ; We humbly address our selves, in the first place, to Almighty God (*the sure Refuge of the Righteous*)

knows) who knows the *Innocency* even of our *Thoughts*: And in the next place, to our *Governours*, the *Witnesses* as well as *Judges* of our *Actions*; unto whom, with humble Confidence, we appeal in the latter, as unto God in the former; Hoping, that the same *Divine Goodness*, which moved the Government to grant this favourable *Indulgence* and *Toleration*, will incline and prevail upon you to continue it, both to us, and all other *Protestant Dissenters*, to whose intended *Ruin* also, we look upon this *Assault* upon us to be but the *Præludium*, that under the Protection of this *Propitious Government*, we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all *Godliness* and *Honesty*, which is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, 1 Tim. 2. 2, 3. And may thence have the Obligation of *Gratitude* added to that of *Duty*, not only to pray for, but, in our several Capacities, to advance and promote the Interest, Safety and Prosperity of this Government and Nation.

F I N I S.